



## Executive Summary

# Civil Society Spotlight Report on the SDG 4 Implementation Status in Mongolia

### COUNTRY FACTS AND FIGURES



<b>TOTAL POPULATION:</b>	3.076 million (UNESCO, 2017)
<b>POPULATION AGED 14 YEARS AND YOUNGER:</b>	913,000 (29.68%) (UNESCO, 2017)
<b>GNI PER CAPITA:</b>	US\$ 3,270 (World Bank, 2017)
<b>INCOME GROUP:</b>	Lower Middle Income Status (World Bank, 2018)
<b>HDI VALUE AND RANK:</b>	0.741, 92 out of 189 (UNDP, 2017)
<b>POVERTY HEADCOUNT RATIO AT NATIONAL POVERTY LINES (% OF POPULATION):</b>	21.6% (World Bank, 2014)
<b>OUT OF SCHOOL:</b>	3,169 children- 2,320 female and 849 male (UNESCO, 2017)
<b>EDUCATION EXPENDITURE:</b>	4.07% of the GDP and 13.49% of the total government expenditure (UNESCO, 2017)

Mongolia is a sparsely populated country with a vast territory and harsh climate situation. It has experienced rapid economic growth from 2011 to 2013. In recent years, however, the country confronted economic difficulties, forcing the government to adopt austerity measures with consequent impact on social services. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the Government of Mongolia remains committed to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### Sustainable Development Goals Rollout

In March 2016, the Parliament of Mongolia approved the long-term development policy “Sustainable Development Vision-2030” (SDV2030). This serves as the main policy framework that will ensure the proper implementation of the SDGs at the national level. The document includes 14 goals and 44 targets in 4 areas, specifically sustainable economic development, sustainable social development, green development, and sustainable governance. It will be implemented in 4 phases: Phase 1-2016-2020, Phase 2- 2021-2025 and Phase 3- 2026-2030. Phase 1 was approved by Parliament on 9 September, 2016. Subsequently, in November 2016, the law on Development Policy and Planning of Mongolia was adopted to define and assess the country's development strategy, including the rights and obligations of stakeholders, and to establish the integrated planning system.

A Subcommittee on the SDGs has been set up under the Standing Committee on Social Policy, Education, Culture, and Science of the Parliament, which serves as the parliamentary oversight body over planning and policy coordination. At the executive level, the newly established National Development Agency (NDA) under the Prime Minister has been designated to coordinate the planning and implementation of the SDGs across different government agencies.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Sports (MECSS) is leading and coordinating the planning and implementation of SDG 4 on Quality Education. The National Coordinator for SDG 4 has yet to be appointed.

Since 2017, annual national consultations on SDG 4 or Education 2030 have been convened by the MECSS in cooperation with UNESCO Beijing Office, the





■ AFE Mongolia participates in the Discussion on the Vocational Education and Training Program for Voters (May 2019)

Mongolian National Commission for UNESCO and UNICEF Mongolia. Different units of the government and CSO representatives participated in these consultations where discussions revolved around the progress and challenges in SDG 4 implementation and the ways forward.

On the SDG indicators, nine task forces were set up in line with the Prime Minister's Decree (No. 44 of 2016) to develop the national indicators. The NDA has the overall responsibility of identifying the national SDG indicators. Mongolia's National Statistics Office (NSO) leads the assessment of indicator availability, the identification of data sources, and the improvement of the methodology for data generation. In support of the national rollout of SDG 4 in particular, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), in collaboration with UNICEF, organised a three-day national capacity-building workshop on education statistics to strengthen the statistical and analytical capacities of the education sector. There were also initiatives to localise the SDGs. With the support of UNDP, The Ulaanbaatar city governor's office has developed the SDG Roadmap and SDG targets and indicators.

The budget for the MECSS grew in nominal terms in 2016, but fell by 6.7 per cent in 2017 in real terms, and increased again in 2018 by 25.8 per cent. Education expenditure relative to GDP was 5 per cent in 2016 but dropped to 4.5 per cent in 2017, before increasing slightly to 4.8 per cent of GDP in 2018. The capital budget increased by 47.0 per cent in 2018, indicating a government policy of investing in physical assets, such as infrastructure and construction, to relieve overcrowding in schools and kindergartens. The increased allocation is a response to the growth school and kindergarten which has been outpacing infrastructure development. However, there is no clear commitment and strategy to finance the implementation of the SDGs. The UNDP also noted that there is a lack of realistic costing and financing strategy for SDV 2030.

While the government has several initiatives to roll out the SDGs, there were shortcomings in its policy development and implementation. The 2018 UN-ADB joint mission on Mongolia's SDG implementation noted that the key policy documents of the government are not fully aligned with global SDGs. Several SDGs at the heart of "leaving no one behind," notably, gender equality and reducing inequalities, have been reflected in the general principles, but lack specific objectives, targets, and action plans. The SDV2030 does not sufficiently recognise the synergies among the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development.<sup>1</sup>

Youth representatives from member organisations of AFE Mongolia carried out an analysis on the policy coherence and alignment of the main policy documents of education sector with SDG 4 targets. The analysis revealed that:

- A majority of the policies and objectives were focused only on increasing access to education.

1 Mongolia. SDGs Mainstreaming, Acceleration and policy support, UN-ADB Joint Mission report, UB, 2018

- Important concepts and principles, such as lifelong learning, inclusive education, quality, and equity in education, have not been sufficiently reflected in those policy documents.
- Some of the objectives and targets set in these policy documents were found to be incoherent or conflict with each other.<sup>2</sup>

There is only one policy objective regarding the education SDG in the SDV-2030 that aims to "increase the enrolment rate in primary and vocational education to 100 per cent, and establish lifelong learning system." However, the key results indicator to assess the implementation of this objective is absolutely limited. The uncertain roles of public organisations or agencies result in the lack of policy coordination. There is hence a need to harmonise the policy and action planning, as well as the government policies and the state budget.

### Civil Society Organisations' Initiatives

There has been some progress in establishing the institutionalised engagement of the CSOs. "All for Education!" National Civil Society Coalition (AFE) Mongolia, a broad national coalition focusing on education, has been actively engaged in education advocacy efforts and working in various policy-level councils and working groups. These include the Local Education Group (LEG), the sub-council on the rights of disabled people, the working group of the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) by the MECSS, and the inter-sectoral permanent working group on integrated policy planning and coordination of child protection under the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor. AFE Mongolia is also represented in the informal sub-council of NGOs under the National Human Rights Commission and acts as a member of the ad hoc council on the UPR implementation under the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs.

AFE Mongolia was invited to several SDG 4-related national policy consultations, such as the "Sustainable Development-Secondary Education" and "Sustainable Development- Higher Education" forums. The coalition also participated in the annual national consultations on SDG 4 and Education 2030 localisation and implementation. The CSO representatives made presentations on the role of civil society in the SDG 4 rollout and on civil society recommendations on localisation and implementation of SDG targets.

The AFE Coalition initiated joint seminars and workshops which brought together professionals, public employees of the education sector, and other stakeholders. During these events, discussions of coalition resource persons revolved around different SDG 4-related topics, such as global citizenship education, bilingual education, social or human diversity, lifelong learning, and child protection in educational institutions. In addition, the coalition prepared and disseminated video copies and handbooks to introduce SDG 4 to the public and developed handouts for teachers who are planning to teach 'global citizenship education' subject to students in partnership with the Institute of Education Research under the MECSS.

2 Outcome document of the AFE National Forum "Education: Quality, Financing, and Accountability" sent to MOE, 2016

## The Voluntary National Review Process

Mongolia is one of the countries that volunteered to present the SDG implementation status during the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York in July 2019. The National Development Agency (NDA) was assigned to coordinate the preparation and presentation of the Voluntary National Review (VNR) which will assess the implementation process of the 17 SDGs in the national context.

On 9 October 2018, the NDA organised a National Consultation to define the outline and scope of the report. Various representatives from government agencies, civil society, the private sector, and academic institutions attended the consultation with the participants analysing the SDGs, ensuring policy coherence, and exchanging views on the VNR and SDG processes. During the meeting, CSO representatives expressed their willingness to contribute to the preparation and writing of the report, aside from simply attending consultations.

The members of the “SDGs-CSOs” network organised a series of meetings and agreed on strategies for CSO participation in the VNR process. They identified the SDG priorities to be analysed and the relevant data to be collected, and defined the scope of written inputs from the CSOs. These were compiled and submitted to the government and the multi-stakeholder working group on the SDGs.

## The Legal Environment on SDG 4

There has been considerable progress in setting the legal environment for the implementation of SDG 4 at the national level, such as the adoption of the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Law on the Rights of the Child and Child Protection in 2016. Earlier in 2015, the state policy on education 2014-2024 had been aligned with SDG 4, particularly in terms of the inclusion of children with disabilities, provision of bilingual education for ethnic minority children, and improvement of school dormitory conditions in rural areas to ensure the safety of herders’ children and provide them with a better learning environment. The education sector of Mongolia, in collaboration with UNESCO and various stakeholders, is currently in the process of formulating a long-term education sector development plan designed to further accelerate the implementation of SDG 4.

## The Education Management Information System

Mongolia has developed an Education Management Information System (EMIS) that is designed to collect integrated statistical data and develop an electronic information database for the education sector. For easier access, it is currently being expanded through the capacity building of school administrators, teachers, students, as well as parents. The information system is expected to support evidence-based policy and programme development by the relevant decision makers. It will also improve management decisions to monitor school drop-outs, class size, migration of students, data collection, and examination results.

## Issues of Equity and Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities (CWD)

Over the last three years, data sources tracking the SDG 4 global indicators, such as primary and secondary school enrolment rate, literacy rate, and pre-school attendance rate, have revealed that there are significant disparities between students in terms of socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, and geographic

location. For instance, less than 70 per cent of children from the poorest quintile finish high school while almost all (96%) children from the richest families complete high school. The parity index based on location illustrated the huge gap in high school enrolment with, about 20 per cent of rural students not completing high school education compared to 10 per cent of students in urban areas. CSOs are concerned about inequitable financing policy that leads to the intensification of social segregation in Mongolian society.

Children with disabilities remain at high risk of being left behind. Because Mongolia is such a vast country, providing quality and inclusive education for CWD is a serious challenge. The concept of inclusion focuses more on CWD, while the inclusion of children from disadvantaged groups, such as children from minority groups and poor households, is deemed as a new concept in society.<sup>3</sup> Presently, no reliable data on the number of school-age CWD is available.

## Recommendations

1. Legislate at least one year of free, compulsory, and quality preschool education to invest in and secure the well-being of future citizens.
2. Use a parity index to measure group differences in enrolment and participation in the learning process and learning outcomes. This index will illustrate disparities that exist among marginalised groups, such as children with disabilities, ethnic minorities, children of herders, children of internal migrants, and children in dormitories.
3. Systematically disaggregate data by location, e.g. urban and rural areas; city centres and ger districts; and soums (districts) and aimag or provincial centres.
4. Implement policies specifically aimed at eliminating differences between public schools and further improving schools in soums, provincial centres, and suburban areas, and modify policies which are segregating and deepening differences between schools, such as the establishment of laboratory schools, public bilingual schools with international programmes.
5. All citizens should obtain Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED) to acquire and apply a range of skills to find possible solutions on unprecedented challenges and key issues at the national and global levels. The quality standards in TVET and higher education institutions should be lifted, and corresponding online courses should be made available to the young people and adults with appropriate financing and technology utilisation.
6. Implement effective measures to build the capacity of secondary schools to address pressing issues, such as discrimination, violence, negative peer pressure, and bullying among children and youth.
7. Develop an appropriate and sensitive per capita funding formula to be used for financing of preschool, primary, and secondary schools, taking into consideration the equity variable related to student and school backgrounds which are uncontrollable by the school itself; develop an overall financing strategy for revenue mobilisation in support of the SDGs and SDVs.
8. Set up a mechanism that will provide opportunities for main stakeholders to consult about education issues at the provincial and local levels to localise the SDGs at the local level.
9. In terms of planning, implementing, and evaluating policies, the government should take into account the specificity of the country and the active engagement of CSOs to ensure an evidence-based education policy. •

<sup>3</sup> Early childhood development and disability: Discussion paper, WHO, UNICEF, 2012 “Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners—including those with disabilities—and can thus be understood as a key strategy to achieve EFA.”



■ AFE Coalition Public Forum

## Youth Perspective on the SDGs

The AFE Coalition has ten member organisations from the youth sector that are actively engaged in the SDG 4 advocacy at the local and national levels. The coalition serves as an open space for the youth constituency to exchange experiences, build their capacity to promote the right to education, and make meaningful contributions to achieve SDG 4 and its targets through information dissemination, public awareness-building, and dialogues with parliamentarians and government officials.

Among the coalition youth members is the Youth Policy Watch NGO, one of the most active organisations in Mongolia promoting youth policy engagement as well as public education on human rights, democratic governance, and meaningful participation. The group is currently focused on youth engagement issues on the SDGs implementation. From the perspective of the young generation, the Youth Policy Watch NGO has proposed the following policy recommendations:

- **On Teachers.** Ensure quality training for teachers to enhance relevant knowledge and pedagogy to develop the learners' life skills.

- **On Finance.** Increase education expenditure on the training and education of young people.
- **On Youth Participation.** Institutionalise the participation of youth-led organisations in policy making and implementation.
- **On Higher Education.** Improve access to higher education and make education free for all up to post-secondary and tertiary level education.
- **On Technology.** Develop technological skills for better access to and availability of knowledge and information.
- **On Safety and Security.** Ensure the provision of education that is inclusive without discrimination based on gender, economic status, ethnicity, disability, and religion.
- **On Employment.** Generate job opportunities, ensure decent working conditions, and develop appropriate skills and entrepreneurship for decent work, employment, and livelihood; and create job markets that are aligned with the interests of the youth. •



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Established in 2010 with support from the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF), All for Education Mongolia (AFE Mongolia) advocates for the full implementation of the Education for All (EFA) goals in the country. The coalition works for sustainable nation-wide changes in the education policies and system to create and strengthen institutionalised channels for the meaningful and impactful citizen and civil society participation at all levels of decision-making, to institutionalise multi-stakeholder consultative mechanisms, and to continuously influence education policy reform to ensure every person's right to life-wide and life-long quality education, all while implementing a human rights-based approach and amplifying the voices of the marginalised. AFE Mongolia is a member organisation of ASPBAE.



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